

# Richards Valley Subarea Plan

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## GOAL:

**To maintain the Subarea as a green and wooded place that provides a complementary mixture of living and working opportunities.**

*Discussion: The Richards Valley Subarea consists of three distinct districts. West of I-405 is heavily vegetated and is developed with a variety of uses – parkland, light industrial, and multifamily. Woodridge Hill is largely residential with a mixture of single-family and multifamily units. East of Woodridge Hill development includes a wide variety of uses – residential, park, warehousing, and extensive retail. Although the community recognizes the need for maintaining working opportunities in the Subarea, they want to ensure that the quality of the residential community and natural features (especially dense vegetation and wooded vistas) remain at a high level.*

## OVERVIEW

According to most sources, Richards Valley was once part of the Duwamish Tribal Territory. Evidence shows a village/habitation site located on or near Mercer Slough.

The earliest English speaking inhabitants of this area prior to 1900 occupied themselves with mining, logging, and farming.

During the 1890s loggers cut large stands of timber on land now known as Woodridge Hill and Richards Valley and into the Factoria area. Logging continued to be important into the 1920s. The railroad trestle built in 1904 serves as an important Richards Valley Subarea landmark.

Land use patterns evolved from early timberland, logging, and farming between the 1920s and 1950s to the current settlements of residential and commercial development. Woodridge Hill and Richards Valley were annexed into Bellevue during the 1960s and 1970s.

Richards Valley, an area of 1,153 acres, forms an oval beginning with I-405 and the Lake Hills Connector to the north, 132nd Avenue S.E. on the east, Mercer Slough on the west and Richards Road and I-405 converging at I-90 to the south. Of the 1,754 housing units in the Subarea 1,022 (58 percent) are single-family units and 732 (42 percent) are multifamily units.

Of the 1.5 million square feet of non-residential uses in Richards Valley, half is industrial, about a quarter is office, and a fifth is institutional and governmental.

Of Bellevue's subareas, only three have land planned for light industrial uses: Bel-Red, North Bellevue, and Richards Valley. Richards Valley has about 120 acres of light industrial land compared to North Bellevue with about 20 acres and Bel-Red with about 400 acres.

Richards Valley has about 140 acres of land planned for office use compared to Eastgate with 246 and Wilburton with 225.

Approximately 2,500 people work in Richards Valley. The residential population is 4,200.

Richards Valley is known for the views from Woodridge Hill and the wooded areas and wetlands in the valley. This plan focuses on protection of the treasured natural features in the face of continued development of residential, office, and light industrial uses.

For instance, the community wants to maintain and preserve single-family neighborhoods as the primary use especially on Woodridge Hill and Woodmoor. A mix of light industrial and additional residential uses is appropriate in the lower elevations of the valley.

In 1987 the City Council adopted the Sensitive Area Requirements to protect sensitive areas in Bellevue. As a result the open use land use designation became obsolete and during the Subarea plan review process the Citizens Advisory Committee redesignated some 115 acres of open use land for residential or commercial uses.

Land uses in the Subarea are indicated on the Land Use Plan Map (*Figure S-RV.1*).

## General Land Use

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### POLICIES

**POLICY S-RV-1.** Ensure that development and site planning comply with the Sensitive Area Regulations.

**POLICY S-RV-2.** Encourage land uses and site development that minimize the appearance of intense development.

**POLICY S-RV-3.** Encourage commercial areas to develop with sensitivity to their surroundings.

*Discussion: Richards Valley is recognized as an employment center and additional commercial development is encouraged in properly designated areas. Commercial development is appropriate if it doesn't degrade the environment and if traffic mitigation addresses traffic congestion and safety problems.*

**POLICY S-RV-4.** Auto sales, auto rental, and auto leasing uses are not appropriate on the parcels in the Light Industrial District that are along the following streets: 118th Avenue S.E., Richards Road, and S.E. 26th.

**POLICY S-RV-5.** Allow recreation and community uses in and on school sites which may be closed in the future.

*Discussion: When determining the appropriate intensity of activity, consider the previous use of the school and the ability of nearby streets to accept additional traffic. When applicable, the community can participate in the conditional use process in deciding appropriate uses on closed school sites.*

## Natural Determinants

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### **POLICIES**

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**POLICY S-RV-6.** Retain the remaining wetlands within the 100-year floodplain along Richards Creek, Kelsey Creek, and Mercer Slough for drainage retention and natural resource park use.

*Discussion: It is important to preserve the natural environment and to retain the native habitat for the aesthetic value and character of the community.*

**POLICY S-RV-7.** Protect and enhance the capability of Richards Creek, Kelsey Creek, and Mercer Slough and their tributaries to support fisheries along with other water-related wildlife.

**POLICY S-RV-8.** Retain and enhance existing vegetation on steep slopes, within wetland areas, and along stream corridors to control erosion and landslide hazard potential and to protect the natural drainage system.

## Residential

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### **POLICIES**

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**POLICY S-RV-9.** Encourage a variety of different densities and housing types in residential areas to accommodate social and economic lifestyles changes as well as the different stages of life.

*Discussion: If moderate or low-income multifamily units are constructed in the Subarea, the sites should be dispersed rather than concentrated in one development.*

## Parks and Recreation

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### **POLICIES**

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**POLICY S-RV-10.** Encourage the City to purchase land for parks and open space when it becomes available.

**POLICY S-RV-11.** Protect and preserve publicly owned land.

*Discussion: This policy refers to land set aside for storm drainage and detention, the right-of-way along the Lake Hills Connector, and potential links in the trail and park system.*

*An efficient way to accomplish this is for the City to purchase properties or parts of properties protected by the City's Sensitive Area Regulations.*

## Transportation

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### **POLICIES**

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**POLICY S-RV-12.** Develop a safe integrated on and off-street nonmotorized system emphasizing connections to schools, parks, transit, and other parts of Bellevue.

*Discussion: Richards Valley needs many nonmotorized improvements. These include better access to the schools, parks, and transit service. Because of its central location to other parts of Bellevue (such as Downtown, and the Kelsey Creek and Mercer Slough Parks), it is important for the off-street trail system to connect safely to the on-street facilities.*

**POLICY S-RV-13.** Provide better pedestrian access and views of Richards Creek, Kelsey Creek, and Mercer Slough.

*Discussion: While pedestrian and visual access is important, it should be balanced with the need to develop sites sensitively and in accordance with Sensitive Area Regulations.*

**POLICY S-RV-14.** Promote development of a nature trail between the Lake Hills Connector and Kamber Road near Richards Creek.

*Discussion: The nature trail should provide the public with views and walking opportunities in this unique and fragile area. The trail should be compatible with the environmentally sensitive areas along the creek.*

**POLICY S-RV-15.** Consider interim solutions for nonmotorized improvements until major improvements can be made.

*Discussion: Use the City's Overlay Program, Minor Capital Projects Fund, Neighborhood Enhancement monies, or other sources to provide interim solutions when practical. When appropriate, consider constructing sidewalks on only one side of the street.*

**POLICY S-RV-16.** Encourage improved Metro transit service to and from key points in the Richards Valley Subarea.

*Discussion: Metro should provide better transit service in the Richards Road corridor to Bellevue Community College, Eastgate, Factoria, the downtowns of Bellevue and Seattle, and the University of Washington.*

**POLICY S-RV-17.** Plan for the long-range traffic related facility needs in the Richards Valley Subarea including designated arterial, feeder (collector), and residential streets.

*Discussion: The East Bellevue Transportation Study will include an evaluation of Richards Valley's arterial facility needs on Richards Road including the impacts of new development on the transportation system.*

**POLICY S-RV-18.** Minimize access to the Lake Hills Connector when considering new development near the Connector.

## Utilities

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### POLICIES

**POLICY S-RV-19.** Encourage the combination of utility and transportation rights-of-way in common corridors and coordinate utility construction with planned street and bike lane improvements which could result in a more efficient allocation of funds.

**POLICY S-RV-20.** Use common corridors for new utilities if needed.

*Discussion: If new power lines are needed in the Subarea, they should be developed in areas that already contain power lines, rather than causing visual impacts in new areas.*

**POLICY S-RV-21.** Improve the appearance of public streets and power line rights-of-way.

**POLICY S-RV-22.** Encourage the undergrounding of utility distribution lines.

## Community Design

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### **POLICIES**

**POLICY S-RV-23.** Disturb as little of the natural character as possible when improving streets and arterials.

*Discussion: The Lake Hills Connector is an example of using natural vegetation along the street frontage and in the median.*

**POLICY S-RV-24.** Encourage the retention and enhancement of special features designated by the Urban Design Element such as unique open spaces, landmarks, and view points.

*Discussion: In Richards Valley the stream and wetlands qualify as unique open space, the railroad trestle as a landmark and the view from Woodridge School grounds as a designated viewpoint.*

**POLICY S-RV-25.** Encourage the retention of vegetation during the clearing, grading, and construction processes to screen development from nearby residential neighborhoods.

**POLICY S-RV-26.** Require design review for areas along Richards Road in order to ensure that site and building design of commercial and multifamily uses in the valley are in character with the nearby single-family neighborhoods.

*Discussion: Commercial and multifamily development should be screened to provide a visual separation from the road. If development cannot be screened, building height, bulk, color, and roofline design should be compatible with the development allowed in the nearby single-family community. Use design review to accomplish this.*

*In addition, use the Richards Creek Sensitive Area as an amenity when designing sites.*

**POLICY S-RV-27.** Development along Richards Road should preserve and maintain the green and wooded character of the Richards Road corridor.

**POLICY S-RV-28.** New development, including single-family development, should install landscaping which provides a dense visual vegetative screen along Richards Road. The planting should be an amenity to those who travel, live, and work along Richards Road.

**POLICY S-RV-29.** Encourage the site and building design of commercial and multifamily use on Woodridge Hill to be in character with the nearby single-family neighborhood.

*Discussion: Building height, bulk, color, and roofline design should be compatible with the development allowed in the nearby single-family community. Use design review to accomplish this.*

**POLICY S-RV-30.** Develop areas designated for light industrial uses with sensitivity to the natural constraints of the sites.

**POLICY S-RV-31.** Encourage screening of rooftop machinery from view at ground level.

